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Testimony for the House Transportation Committee on HB 4961 on April 22, 2010

Chairman Byrnes and Committee Members, thanks for letting me testify.

I believe the original bill as introduced is not acceptable. It contains no legislative oversight of any kind on what projects could be undertaken and which could become facilities with tolls paid directly by the public. Michigan has very few public transportation facilities that have direct tolls, and each was approved in advance by the legislature. I believe this is wise.

I know there may be several "H-Something" Substitutes offered, which makes it impossible to prepare specific comments in advance, since none of the alternatives are on the website.

Therefore, my testimony is based on principles, rather than specifics.

First, if HB 4961 were restricted to authorizing a public private partnership for ONLY one new bridge across the Detroit River, in any location, that is OK. A single project authorization is limited to just that, and there would be no future surprises that might not be acceptable.

Second, I believe it is wise for the legislature to retain approval, IN ADVANCE, of any public private partnership that would involve direct tolls paid by the public to use the facility. This approval should come BEFORE any proposals or bids are formally solicited.

Third, any public private partnership legislation should contain absolute prohibitions for any existing facility becoming a direct toll facility. It would be manifestly unfair for the public to have to begin paying tolls on any facility that their tax dollars have already paid for – including any future reconstructions of existing facilities using partly private funds. Any facility with tolls paid by the public must be one that adds NEW capacity to our transportation system.

I will be happy to answer any questions.

Respectfully submitted,



James C. Walker



National Motorists Association [www.motorists.org](http://www.motorists.org)